
The Children's Division (CD) staff is responsible for maintaining equilibrium when assessing families that have a willingness to adopt cross-racially/cross-culturally. More emphasis should not be placed on any one particular section of the Workers' Assessment Guide for Families Adopting Cross-Racially/Cross-Culturally.

Beginning the Assessment

Staff has a responsibility:

- a) To interpret the Division's position on the mandated order in which the family will receive assessment services;
- b) To provide enough information so that the applicants can make a knowledgeable decision about becoming adoptive parents - including necessary pre-placement and post-placement activities.
- c) To interpret the assessment process as one in which together, the Division and the prospective adoptive parents can determine potential for successful adoptive parenting.
- d) To convey information and promote discussion between the Children's Service Worker and the applicants so that a determination may be made as to the applicants' ability to parent children who have different cultural needs than the applicant.
- e) To exchange information in such a way that the agency and applicants can mutually determine whether or not it is desirable that the study be continued.
- f) To share information regarding the selection process and selection philosophy that CD is seeking an adoptive family who can best meet the child's needs and serve the best interests of the child. Important information to be shared includes:
 - Referral of their written assessment to the county office and agencies when such organizations recruit families for the type of child they can accept.
 - A brief outline of the CD selection process including that they may be asked to participate in an interview with the selection committee and that they may refuse this interview without this decision influencing the staffing committee's consideration of them as a resource for the child.
 - A description of the committee and its team effort.

TITLE: CHILD WELFARE MANUAL
SECTION 6: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 3: RESOURCE FAMILY ASSESSMENT PROCESS
ATTACHMENT H: GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENT SERVICES
EFFECTIVE DATE: August 28, 2004
PAGE: 2

The study must be completed within six (6) months of receipt of the application and shall consist of (If verification exists in foster parent record, should be used, not repeated):

- a) Joint and/or separate interviews with the applicants, their children and other adults in home;
- b) A home visit for assurance of adequacy and safety;
- c) A minimum of three (3) references, confirmed on reference form, CS-101g, Personal Reference Questionnaire;
- d) Review of Family Support Division (FSD) screens. The county should begin the review by using the following screens:
 - SCLR - Department of Social Services (DSS) data base access with name, sex and date of birth;
 - KDCN - Protective Services (PS) inquiry (accessed by DCN);
 - IPAR - Income Maintenance (IM) information (accessed by DCN);
 - FPAR - Food Stamp (FS) information (accessed by DCN);
 - OVCI - Claims and Restitution (CARS) information (accessed by DCN); and
 - DPAR Family Support Division participation screen (accessed by DCN).

When information is found regarding an applicant, the system inquirer should continue using other pertinent screens to gather as much data as possible to assist in the decision-making process.

STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED FOR APPROVAL:

The following steps shall be completed for every applicant and adult household member (age 17 and older). ***Supporting documentation of each step is to be filed in the licensing record.***

NOTE: The same steps are to be followed in completion of any ICPC assessment as are followed for licensure as referenced in Memo CD04-63.

1. The Child Abuse/Neglect background screening will continue to be done by the local Children's Division (CD).
2. Each household member 17 years of age and older must register with the Family Care Safety Registry (FCSR). The registry is maintained by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). It will search the following systems:

- CA/N records (findings of "Preponderance of Evidence" court adjudicated", or prior to August 28, 2004, "Probable Cause" findings),
- Employee Disqualification List, maintained by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS),
- Child-care facility licensing records maintained by DHSS,
- Residential living facility and nursing home records, maintained by DHSS,
- Employee Disqualification Registry maintained by Department of Mental Health;
- Foster parent licensing records, maintained by the Children's Division (CD); and
- Sex Offender Registry information maintained by MSHP.

A) Give the applicant a "Worker Registration Form" for each adult in the household to register with the FCSR. Copies of the form can be ordered from the warehouse or downloaded at www.dhss.state.mo.us/FCSR.

B) Instruct the applicant to register as quickly as possible by submitting the completed form and a photocopy of their social security card to the Missouri Department of Health, Fee Receipts Unit, P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102. *The form may be faxed to 573-522-6981 to ensure a priority response.*

If no social security card is available, the only acceptable substitute is a driver's license (if the SSN is used as the ID number); a military ID; a Medicare card; or the Social Security Administration statement provided when application is made for a replacement card (as long as it has the SSN identified, the name appears on the statement and it is initialed or signed by a SSA representative).

Registrants (and all their adult household members) who are foster or adoptive parents, respite providers, or are applying to provide those services must check the foster parent box in Section A to avoid having to pay the registration fee.

C) The licensing worker may telephone the FCSR at 1-866-422-6872 to make a background screening request. Generally information will be available within two weeks. An oral report will be given at the time of the

call and will be followed with a written report to both the requestor and the registrant within 48 hours.

- D) **REGISTRATION IS ONLY REQUIRED ONCE.** If completing a background screening for re-licensure, the worker needs to only call the FCSR.

Note: Families who do not have Social Security numbers due to their religious practices (i.e. Amish) are not required to register and note of this should be documented in their record and study.

3. State and national criminal record checks will be completed for each adult household member age 17 or older, or any person under the age of 17 who has been certified as an adult. **Fingerprints are now required.** The Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) will complete a state criminal record check and then electronically send the fingerprint images to the FBI for a national search of criminal records.

The criminal record check may reveal open and closed record information on individuals consisting of arrests, prosecutor and court actions, correctional supervision, and release. All felony and serious misdemeanor arrests including sexual offender registration information as defined under 589.400, RSMo. All alcohol and drug related traffic offenses are considered reportable criminal offenses.

The Children's Division Background Screening Investigative Unit (BSIU) will be the point of entry with the MSHP.

- A) Send two Applicant fingerprint cards to the Background Screening Investigative Unit (BSIU), Children's Division, P.O. Box 88, Jefferson City, Mo 65103.
- 1) Pre printed "Fingerprint Applicant" cards (Form #FD-258) may be ordered from the warehouse. The card has the number **M0920360Z** printed in the ORI field. This is the Originating Agency Identifier number that has been assigned to BSIU. The number conveys to the Highway Patrol and the FBI that all reports will be sent to BSIU and paid for by the Children's Division.
 - 2) Each card must be signed by the person being fingerprinted.
 - 3) The "Employer and Address" field must have the local Children's Division (CD) requesting the report. If a contracted agency is completing the assessment, state the contractor's name but place it within parentheses under the local office name. This information will only be used by BSIU and will show where the completed report is to be sent.

- 4) The "Reason Fingerprinted" field must indicate the associated statutes for supervision over minors, **43.540 RSMo** and the sex offender statute **589.400 RSMo**.
- 5) Fingerprinting for respite and court ordered placement providers is optional until such time that funding is made available. If requesting such fingerprints, attach a check or money order made payable to the Criminal Record History Fund. The cost is \$14.00 for the MSHP and \$24.00 for the FBI (\$38.00 total) and will be at the expense of the provider.

The completed reports will be sent to BSIU and then forwarded to the local CD office. The MSHP response will be received first. After the FBI has completed its search, any results will be forwarded to the MSHP, who will then forward the results to BSIU.

Per FBI guidelines, FBI reports can be released to local county offices and made available in court. FBI rap sheets cannot be released to contractors or to private entities. Even if a contractor has requested the information to complete an assessment, they are not allowed access to the report. The local office will have the responsibility to convey to the contractor one of the following: 1) The report is clear; proceed with the assessment, or 2) The report revealed something that must be explored. The contractor will then be requested to refer the family to the local office before continuing the assessment. Local office staff will then meet with the applicant and determine whether the applicant will be allowed to proceed with the application. If the applicant is selected out, the local office staff must inform the family in writing and notify the contractor.

4. Examine Case net, the Missouri State Courts Automated Case Management System, for any reference to Orders of Protection filed, either for a child or adult. There are limits to the use of Case.net. Case.net is not yet statewide so will not include all county circuit courts. Also, at this time public view does not include identifiers such as social security and birth dates; so, it is difficult to determine whether the individual you are searching is the same as one found in Case.net.
5. In locations where Case.net is not yet available, check with the circuit court for any pertinent information, including a record of Orders of Protection filed, both for a child or an adult. Additional circuit courts may need to be contacted if there is reason for concern. Any fee charged by the circuit court will be paid by the applicant.

Except for the specific felony convictions listed below, a criminal history, child abuse/neglect history, or other review information does not automatically preclude approval. Staff should determine the relevance of all such findings to child caring responsibilities, and should seek guidance from supervisors. A supervisor must review and evaluate the background information if there is a record of conviction (other than those listed below) and/or child abuse and if the decision is to approve the home study. The supervisor's review and decision to approve/disapprove must be documented.

FELONY CONVICTIONS

Staff may not approve the application of any person in which a record check reveals that a felony conviction for child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against children (including child pornography), or a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery was determined by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Staff may also not approve the application of any person who in the past five years has had a court of competent jurisdiction determine a felony conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense.

For the purpose of this policy, a "felony conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction" is defined as a criminal court conviction for a felony offense as defined by law in the jurisdiction that the offense took place.

In the unlikely event that it is determined that the best interest of a child would be served by placement in this setting, written approval must be obtained through supervisory lines to the Area Office. The Area Office must review the request and, if in agreement, forward with their recommendation to the Deputy Director for Children's Division for final consideration. Written requests should include a thorough description of the applicant's situation and why it would be in the child's best interest for an exception to be granted. If approved by the Deputy Director, IV-E funding may not be used and the Children's Services Worker will be responsible for notifying the Eligibility Specialist who will ensure that state only funds are used.

Unless a new conviction occurs, this will not affect the status of any currently licensed or certified parents, however, federal funds may not be used for foster care maintenance or adoption assistance payments if any of the aforementioned conditions exist. It is imperative that in those circumstances the Children's Services Worker notifies the Eligibility Specialist who will enter the correct fund code for state only funding.

REIMBURSEMENT

Applicants who are subsequently licensed/approved and are issued a vendor number are to receive reimbursement for the cost of the criminal check. This should only be necessary if they obtained the screening from another state or did not go through the Division to obtain a criminal check from the Highway Patrol.

These applicants must prepare an invoice to be reimbursed and must provide a front and back copy of their canceled check. The DBF-14 should be approved through normal supervisory channels and forwarded to Management Services.

NOTE: If a screening is being requested on an adult child (over age 18) or other adults, related or unrelated, living in the home, these individuals shall be instructed to contact the Missouri State Highway Patrol directly to request a criminal check.

Verified health status of applicants and their children.

Assessment of readiness for adoptive parenthood.

The Assessment Process Includes:

Determination of readiness for adoptive parenthood

Assessment of motivation and attitudes, including:

- a) Why are the applicants interested in adopting, and why are they applying now, as well as the reason they are interested in parenting culturally diverse children and the impact of their decision on their family, extended family, friends and neighbors;
- b) How do they perceive the importance of biological parenthood;
- c) Do they consider adoption second best?
- d) Assess applicants' life style, the ability to teach a child coping skills for their cultural diversity and give a child sense of cultural knowledge, pride, and identity.

Physical and personality description, observations of the applicants' family and individual functioning.

Life history

- a) Past relationships with parents, siblings, extended family.
- b) Significant events, both positive and negative as described by applicants.
- c) Prior marital relationships, if applicable.
- d) Their own nationality and sense of cultural identity, knowledge of other identities, cultures and the significance of these inter-relationships.

Current Relationships

Discuss family interaction, including husband and wife, children, and extended family - respective roles, openness of communication, decision-making, rules, discipline, stability of marriage.

NOTE: THERE IS NO LENGTH OF MARRIAGE REQUIREMENT.

- a) Discuss the family's interaction with the community, including school, neighborhood, and larger community.
- b) What support systems are available to the applicants?
- c) Evaluate the cultural composition of the neighborhood, including schools, churches, child care centers and other organizations with which the child would interact. Evaluate with the applicants how these resources can be used to benefit the child's diverse cultural needs.

Adoptive Child as Family Member

- a) Discuss the type of child desired, and expectations of an adopted child.
- b) Are all the family members (including extended family) accepting of the plan to adopt?
- c) How will their routine be affected by an additional child?
- d) Discuss their acceptance of a child not shaped by them, biologically or socially.
- e) The willingness and commitment of the family to discuss adoption with the child, and the same with extended family, and community, as appropriate.
- f) How will they deal with negative community attitudes?
- g) Determine the applicants' understanding and knowledge of the development and behavior of children.
- h) Will the family accept child's previous family - visits, phone calls, etc.?

Money Management

- a) How do the applicants manage their money?
- b) What are the family members' roles in management?
- c) Do they have income sufficient to support all members of the family?

Health

- a) If there are health problems, how do the family members cope with them? If there is a disability, how do other family members compensate?
- b) Secure from their physician a health statement of each member of the family using form CW-216, Adoptive Home Medical Report.

- c) Determine any history of hospitalization for either physical or emotional problems.
- d) Determine any history of treatment for any psychiatric problem.
- e) Determine any history of treatment for any form of substance abuse.
- f) The preferred age differential between the children placed for adoption and the adoptive parent(s) is such that the adoptive parent(s) can be expected to rear them to adulthood.
- g) When the above standard cannot be met, inquiry must be made about the family's willingness to obtain commitment from other immediate or extended family members to rear the adopted child to adulthood.

NOTE: Such action should take place before any placement is made.

Employment

- a) Discuss employment history with the applicants.
- b) If both are employed, what are the child care plans?

Religion

- a) What are applicants' religious practices and attitudes?
- b) What are applicants' expectations for adopted children regarding the family's religious attitudes?

Children in the home

- a) What is the school history of each child in the home?
- b) What is the development and adjustment to school?

The home and community

- a) Describe the home, adequacy of space, state of repair, housekeeping conditions, the surroundings and the neighborhood.
- b) Give a brief description of the community. (Consider economic level, moral influence, housing standards, health conditions, recreation, school, and church.)

- c) Is there access to special resources such as diagnostic clinics, therapists, special medical facilities?

References

- a) At least three (3) references unrelated to the applicant, must be contacted, and confirmed on reference form CS-101g. If the family has children, it is recommended that a reference from each child's teacher be submitted on a CS-101e.
- b) How long have they known the family and in what capacity?
- c) What is the reference's opinion of the applicants' relationship with each other and the stability of their marriage?
- d) What is the reference's opinion of the applicants' ability to parent their own children, as well as an adoptive child?

Evaluation

- a) Assess and summarize, based upon the applicants' statements, what their references have said, and the CSW's own observations. Document whether or not these applicants are capable of meeting the needs of and providing opportunities for the healthy growth and development of a child(ren).
- b) Assess and summarize applicants' strengths and weaknesses such as:
- c) Their capacity to make a child a part of the family,
- d) Their capacity to understand and handle problems, and
- e) Their ability to deal with a special needs child.

Recommendation

Discuss and explain to the applicants the recommendation as to number, age, and sex of child or children the applicants could best parent.

Discuss and explain the recommendation if it is to suspend, withdraw, or deny a license to an individual or family, remembering that such a decision should not be a surprise to the applicants. This decision can be made at any time during the study process. Also, remember that the Children's Service Worker should be as honest as possible with the applicant regarding the decision, recognizing the applicants' sensitivity and tolerance.